Chapter One

The Irish and the Big-City Machines

Rainbow's End is a study of Irish-American machine politics from the mid-nineteenth century to the present in eight once heavily Irish cities: New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Jersey City, and Albany. Daniel Patrick Moynihan has observed that the Irish-American genius has been organizational rather than entrepreneurial or intellectual.[1] Displaying a "distaste for commerce" and ideas, the Irish labored to build the American Catholic church and the big-city Democratic machines. Arguably the largest section in the pantheon of Irish-American heroes is reserved for the big-city party bosses, from Tammany Hall's "Honest John" Kelly in the 1870s to Chicago's Richard Daley in the 1970s.

Notwithstanding the demise of the old-time big-city machines, Irish-American politicos are still larger-than-life figures. The departed Celtic party bosses continue to cast a long shadow over contemporary urban minority groups, particularly blacks and Hispanics, who search for routes of group economic advancement. The Irish are reputed to have used a political route to travel from rags to riches, capturing the patronage-laden machines and turning public employment into an Irish preserve. Before today's ethnic groups emulate the Irish, however, they would do well to carefully examine the Irish experience with the big-city machines, separating historical fact from fiction. This study attempts such a task.

The machine emerged as the major urban political institution in the late nineteenth century; the Irish were among its leading architects and practitioners. A form of clientele politics, the party machine organized the electorate in order to control the tangible benefits of public office—patronage, services, contracts, and franchises. The machine employed these resources to maintain power. Bosses purchased voter support with offers of public jobs and services rather than by appeals to traditional loyalties or to class interests.

With roots in the second or Jacksonian party system of the 1820s and 1830s, the full-fledged or mature urban machine did not emerge until the third party system entered an advanced stage in the 1870s and 1880s. By 1890 centralized machines controlled one-half of the nation's twenty largest cities. Tammany Hall finally had consolidated its hold over Manhattan. Hugh McLaughlin's Democratic organization ruled neighboring Brooklyn. In Philadelphia, the McManes's Republican machine, which had governed the city since the end of the Civil War, was about to give way to the Durham and Vare GOP machines. Chris Magee ruled Republican Pittsburgh, and George Cox controlled Republican Cincinnati. Edward Butler had created a bipartisan machine to run St. Louis. San Francisco was controlled by the Democratic "Blind Boss" Christopher Buckley and the fire department, his political praetorian guard. Robert "Little Bob" Davis controlled Jersey City and surrounding Hudson County. Boss William F. Sheehan ran politics in Republican Buffalo. An entrenched Democratic machine, successor to Martin Van Buren's Regency, ruled Albany.[2]

Although the Irish did not control all of the big-city machines by 1890, they had captured most of the Democratic party organizations in the northern and midwestern cities. Lamenting the "Irish conquest of our cities," Yankee John Paul Bobcock furnished in 1894 a roll call of the late-nineteenth-century Celtic party bosses: John Kelly and Richard Croker in New York City, Hugh McLaughlin in Brooklyn, Mike McDonald in Chicago, Pat Maguire in Boston, Christopher Buckley in San Francisco, William Sheehan in Buffalo, and "Little Bob" Davis in Jersey City. In the twentieth century, more names would be added to the list: Charles Francis Murphy in New York City; Ed Kelly, Pat Nash, and Richard Daley in Chicago; James Michael Curley and Martin Lomasney in Bos-

ton; David Lawrence in Pittsburgh; Frank Hague in Jersey City; Dan O'Connell in Albany; and Tom and Jim Pendergast in Kansas City.[3]

The Irish, as Edward Levine argues, were "given to politics."[4] No other ethnic group made the same contribution to the building of the urban machines. Germans migrated to the United States in as large numbers as the Irish. The Germans were also nearly as urbanized as the Irish, settling in midwestern rather than eastern cities. Yet there were few German bosses or machines. Jews embraced reform and labor rather than machine politics. San Francisco's Abe Ruef and Chicago's Jake Arvey were among the few Jewish bosses. A few black bosses such as William Dawson in Chicago and Homer Brown in Pittsburgh ran sub-machines of white-controlled organizations. To the extent that the Irish-American bosses designated an ethnic heir apparent, it was the Italians. Italian bosses such as Carmine De Sapio of Tammany Hall took over many of the aging Irish machines in the late 1940s and 1950s. Yet the Italians were usually called on to preside over the machine's demise, not its rebirth. In more than one sense, the Italians were left "holding the bag."

Not only did the Irish predominate among urban ethnic party bosses, but they were also the architects of the strongest and most long-lived big-city machines. Compared with their Republican counterparts, Irish-run Democratic machines proved to be mobilizing and welfarist organizations. Republican machines, in Lincoln Steffens's phrase, were constructed "in the air."[5] As urban offshoots of state-level GOP machines, Republican big-city machines relied on the Yankee middle-class vote and did little to mobilize immigrant voters. With a middle-class constituency demanding low taxes, big-city GOP machines had little incentive to incorporate working-class immigrant groups and reward them with costly welfare services.

Big-city Democratic political machines, in contrast, were built "from the bottom up." Rooted in the institutional life of working-class ethnic neighborhoods—saloons, clubhouses, volunteer fire departments—Democratic organizations did a better job than their Republican counterparts of naturalizing and registering immigrants and rewarding them with patronage jobs and social services. The resulting longevity of Irish Democratic machines is re-

markable. Under Celtic tutelage, Tammany Hall ran New York (with minor exceptions) from 1874 to 1933. The Hague machine controlled Jersey City from 1917 to 1949. Dan O'Connell built the Albany machine in 1922; it has yet to lose a city election. The Chicago machine ruled the Windy City from 1931 until Harold Washington's mayoral victory in 1983.

Yet the once mighty Irish machines are now in eclipse. Government bureaucracies and labor unions have assumed the welfare and employment functions once fulfilled by the machines. Civil service reform has limited their supply of patronage jobs. Their ethnic constituents have moved to the suburbs. Of the legion of Irish machines, only those of Chicago and Albany remain as relics of the past. In all likelihood, these two vestiges will soon pass from the scene. The powerful Chicago machine has been progressively weakened since 1976, losing the mayoral elections of 1979 and 1983. The Albany machine entered an interregnum phase with the death of Erastus Corning, O'Connell's successor, in 1983.

The Rainbow Theory of the Machine

Paradoxically, the demise of the Irish machine has been accompanied by a metamorphosis in our understanding of its achievements. During its heyday, it was castigated by progressives as corrupt and undemocratic. For muckraker Lincoln Steffens, the shame of machine politics was the "triumph of the commercial spirit" in public life.[6] Political reformer Frederick Howe scored the city boss for serving as a "majordomo" for large transportation and utility firms while ignoring the welfare of the working class.[7] For M. Ostrogorski, machine politics marked the triumph of "party formalism," the elevation of office over political principle.[8]

In the machine's twilight era, social scientists such as Robert Merton and Robert Dahl offered a much different understanding of its performance. The new view may be termed the "rainbow" theory of the old-style urban machine. The theory refers to both the *players* and the *prizes* of urban politics. In this view, urban machines, though corrupt and undemocratic, actively worked to incorporate working-class immigrant groups such as the Irish, Jews, and Italians. Machines supposedly fashioned multiethnic "rain-

bow" electoral coalitions, rewarding each group with jobs and services drawn from a sizable pot of municipal gold.[9]

The prizes awaiting ethnic capture in city politics appeared substantial. Urban machines controlled thousands of official and unofficial patronage jobs, the latter with firms franchised by or doing business with the city. More than 40,000 New York municipal jobs, for example, were at Tammany Hall's disposal in the late 1880s. Machines also controlled the awarding of public contracts, especially important in an era when cities were making their major capital improvements. Between 1900 and 1910, for example, San Francisco embarked on an ambitious program to make the city the "Paris of North America." Municipal expenditures rose threefold, from $5.6 to $17.4 million, to pay for new schools, hospitals, parks, playgrounds, sewers, and utilities. Local newspapers estimated that more than 6,000 contract jobs had been created by the program, considerably exceeding the combined city-county payroll.[10]

According to the rainbow theory, the Irish were the main beneficiaries of machine politics. Robert Dahl, for example, argues that the Irish used a political strategy to move from the working class into the middle class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Celtic political activity—voter mobilization, participation in party politics, and municipal office holding—supposedly led to a disproportionate share of public sector resources, thereby accelerating the development of an Irish middle class. First- and second-generation Irish displayed a singular talent for electoral politics. In San Francisco, the proportion of adult Irish males registered to vote in 1900 was nearly double that of the city's other foreign-born adult males—70 percent versus 37 percent—and equaled that of the native-born.[11]

Group political mobilization seemingly brought economic results. Controlling such cities as New York, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco by the 1880s, Irish bosses helped "Hibernianize" the public payroll. In the nation's fourteen largest cities between 1870 and 1900, the proportion of public employees of Irish parentage climbed from 11 percent to 30 percent while the proportion of the labor force of Irish parentage in these cities remained at 20 percent. Using public sector job opportunities, the Irish appeared

to move into the urban middle class with surprising rapidity considering their meager job skills and the employment discrimination they encountered. Between 1870 and 1900 the proportion of first- and second-generation Irish in white-collar jobs in cities of more than 100,000 population, where over 40 percent of the nation's Irish-Americans lived, rose from 12 percent to 27 percent, while among the non-Irish in the big cities, the increase in white-collar ranks was relatively smaller, from 27 percent to 34 percent.[12]

The rainbow theory figured prominently in the ethnic revival movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Blacks and "unmeltable" whites drew on—and further embellished—the legend of Irish power. In particular, the legend served as a yardstick in the black power debates because it supposedly demonstrated the efficacy of local electoral strategies for capturing public sector resources, enabling significant numbers of an ethnic group to escape poverty. Blacks found the Irish model increasingly compelling as their political demands shifted from obtaining legal rights in the South to remedying economic conditions in the urban North. Black political leaders were called on to exchange nonelectoral skills—mass protest and constitutional litigation—for the electoral and organizational skills practiced by the Irish. As Charles Hamilton argues, "While other racial and ethnic leaders could spend time exploring the process of machine politics—learning how to recruit and deliver voters, and how to reward, punish and bargain for benefits—blacks had to spend time checking legal precedents and filing lawsuits. . . . Blacks, in other words, developed plaintiffs rather than precinct captains. . . . There were no black success models in the manner of Tammany Hall, Boss Crump, or the Cook County Democratic political machine."[13]

Notwithstanding its popularity, it is time to lay the rainbow theory of the urban machine to rest. In this study I argue that throughout most of their history, urban machines did *not* incorporate immigrants other than the Irish. The machine's arsenal of resources was far more modest than it sometimes appeared. Owing to the scarce nature of the machine's benefits, the Irish could not readily translate political power into group economic advancement. Limited as these prizes were, the Irish jealously guarded them, parsimoniously accommodating the later-arriving Southern and Eastern Europeans and blacks. The newcomers struggled constantly

with their Irish political overlords. Their anti-Irish insurgency took varied forms: third parties, reform movements, and revolts within the machines. For the later ethnic arrivals, integration into the urban machines was a hard-won, delayed, and ultimately limited accomplishment.

My critique of the rainbow theory is based on a reassessment of both the machine's electoral strategies and its resource supply. In brief, the entrenched Irish machines were one-party regimes with few opponents. Having already constructed a minimal winning coalition among "old" immigrant—that is, Western European—voters, the established machines had little need to naturalize, register, and vote later ethnic arrivals. Moreover, machine bosses did not control an unlimited cornucopia of benefits. In particular, there was a limited supply of patronage with which to reward various ethnic claimants. So that the Irish could control the machine's scarce core resources of power and patronage, the Celtic bosses gave the slowly mobilizing "new" immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe less valuable benefits—services, symbolic recognition, and collective benefits such as labor and social welfare legislation.

If power represented the "approved Irish secular value," as Edward Levine argues, there were limits to its use.[14] In this study, I address two interrelated dilemmas of the Irish machine, one economic, the other political. The first dilemma is that it was a poor mechanism for Irish economic advancement. Individual Irish bosses, contractors, and lawyers made fortunes off the machine. Tammany boss Richard Croker, for example, born penniless, retired from political life to enjoy the pleasures of raising horses on his baronial estate in Ireland. Yet I would argue that political machines could not serve as a route from rags to riches for the Irish working class. The first generation of machines built in the late nineteenth century controlled too little patronage to affect appreciably the life chances of the Irish. The twentieth-century machines created a much greater supply of patronage, and the Irish crowded into the public sector. On the eve of the Depression, more than one-third of the Irish workforce in machine cities depended on patronage for their livelihood. Yet the patronage created was blue-collar rather than white-collar, the wrong sort for group social mobility. As policemen, firemen, and city laborers, the Irish re-

mained solidly lower-middle-class. Only with the machine's decline, forcing the Irish into higher education and private sector jobs, have the Irish been able to build a solid middle class rooted in business and the professions.[15] There were good political reasons for machines to prefer creating blue-collar jobs even though this hindered Irish economic advancement. Blue-collar jobs were cheaper, and more could be created for a given outlay. More jobs meant more votes for the machine.

The second dilemma of the Irish machine was political. The machine's organizational maintenance needs—building citywide electoral pluralities, securing necessary party financing, placating the business community—introduced a conservative strain into Irish-American urban leadership, resulting in lost opportunities to represent working-class political interests more fully. As they learned to manipulate the levers of urban power, Irish bosses turned their backs on more radical forms of working-class politics. The machine ultimately tamed Irish voters as well as leaders. The Irish working class was in the forefront of the labor insurgency against the machines in the 1870s and 1880s. Yet Irish enthusiasm for labor politics dimmed as ever-larger numbers were brought into the patronage system. The failure of labor parties in the big cities can thus partly be understood in terms of the threat they posed to the entrenched Irish machines and their ethnic beneficiaries.

The Life Cycle of the Urban Machine

Rainbow's End is a study of big-city machine politics as well as of ethnic politics. A second purpose of this study is to offer a new theory of the life cycle of the urban machine—its origins, longevity, and decline. Regarding the machine's origins, I offer a revision of the two leading theories. A "mass" theory, found in the work of Edward Banfield, James Q. Wilson, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, argues that machines emerge as a reflection of an ethnic group's values and social structure. For Banfield and Wilson, the machine's trafficking in divisible benefits is a response to the "private-regarding" ethos of the European immigrants. For Moynihan, Celtic machines such as Tammany Hall are a reproduction of Irish village life.[16]

An "elite" theory, such as that found in the work of Martin Shefter, views the machine as an elite- rather than mass-created institution. Immigrant voters may demand divisible material benefits, but this demand pattern does not inevitably produce a centralized political machine. Party bosses build centralized machines by successfully resolving the organization's maintenance needs—a winning supply of votes, reward and discipline of the party's precinct and ward captains, control of public officials, and adequate party financing.[17]

This study poses a question that neither of these theories adequately answers: Why did cities such as New York produce powerful long-lasting machines whereas cities such as Boston, America's Dublin, never rose above factional ward politics? Mass and elite theories would predict that centralized machines would emerge in each city. Both cities had large Irish populations. Both cities had talented and ambitious Irish party leaders—John Kelly, Richard Croker, and Charles Francis Murphy in New York and James Michael Curley and Martin Lomasney in Boston.

I answer this question with an *intergovernmental* theory of big-city machines that highlights the pivotal role of local alliances with party leaders at the state and federal levels during the machine's fragile incubation period. In New York, unlike Massachusetts, Democratic governors friendly to Tammany Hall in the 1880s directed state patronage to the fledgling machine, seriously weakening Tammany's factional opponents by freezing them out of state assistance. Machine-building alliances extended to the federal level as well. During the 1930s, Irish party bosses such as Ed Kelly and Pat Nash in Chicago and David Lawrence in Pittsburgh used federal job programs such as the WPA to build a new generation of Democratic machines.

Once centralized machines emerged, how did they maintain themselves in power? The rainbow theory suggests they built multiethnic coalitions, enticing each group with the organization's apparent arsenal of jobs, services, and other tangible benefits. In this study I offer a different theory of the machine's longevity. Contrary to the rainbow theory, the political mobilization of ethnic groups entailed substantial risks. Newly enfranchised voters could demand more than the machine could offer. Moreover, throughout

most of its history, there were sharp limits on the machine's supply of material inducements. For example, the willingness of voters and taxpayers to support an increase in city tax rates or indebtedness limited the number of municipal patronage jobs. The specter of middle-class tax revolts haunted Irish party bosses from John Kelly in the 1870s to Richard Daley in the 1970s. To these political constraints on the machine's patronage stock must be added legal constraints. State Republican machines and even a few reform Democratic governors fashioned constitutional straitjackets on the machine's ability to raise and spend public money.

Whereas the rainbow theory *assumes* a cornucopia of machine resources and concentrates on the question how machines distributed benefits to different claimants, I start with the premise that party bosses had to husband *scarce* resources. The demands of ethnic groups and the working class for jobs and services nearly always exceeded the machine's available supply. The secret of machine longevity, then, was bringing electoral demand into balance with resource supply.

How did machines manage electoral demand? I distinguish between two distinct stages of machine building: an embryonic stage, where fledgling machines face strong competitive electoral pressures from the opposition party and from rival factions within their own party; and a consolidation stage, where machines have triumphed over their opponents and have built minimal winning voter coalitions. Embryonic machines are mobilizers. They face competitive pressures to increase the number of partisan voters. Entrenched machines, in contrast, are selective mobilizers. Having defeated the other party's machine and rival factions, consolidated machines need only bring out their traditional supporters. There is little electoral incentive to mobilize newer ethnic arrivals.

Embryonic machines actively courted nonvoters. Tammany Hall's record naturalization of 41,000 immigrants in the 1868 gubernatorial campaign is testimony to the budding machine's weakness, not its strength. Similarly, late nineteenth-century Irish Democratic machines in San Francisco, Boston, Jersey City, and Albany naturalized and registered the "old," that is, Western European, immigrants. In cities controlled by fledgling machines, there was a dramatic increase in the size of the urban electorate and in voter participation rates.

The problem with the mobilization approach to managing electoral demand is that newly enfranchised voters must in some fashion be rewarded. Otherwise, their grievances against the machine mount and they are ripe for capture by the machine's opponents. Embryonic machines, however, often did not have the resources to pay off their new constituents. The mobilizing Irish machines of the late nineteenth century were forced by political and legal constraints to pursue conservative fiscal and patronage policies. The price of mobilizing the "old" ethnics was the continued threat of working-class insurgency. In the 1886 New York mayoral election, for example, Tammany Hall lacked the resources to buy off the ethnic working class and barely beat back the challenge of Henry George and the United Labor party.

Electoral mobilization without reward forced fledgling machines to develop a second set of voter management techniques. Electoral fraud and repression represented the major secondary techniques. In New York City's crucial 1886 mayoral election, Tammany Hall countered massive Irish and German working-class support for Henry George with thorough control of the city's police and thus of the ballot box. Uncounted ballots, nearly all for George, were seen floating down the Hudson for days after the election. In the twentieth century, the Chicago and Albany machines confounded the census takers by registering and voting the dead, the departed, and even the unborn. O'Connell's organization in Albany, for example, claimed the votes of 61 percent of the city's entire *population* of 131,000 in the 1940s.

Besides voter fraud, emerging machines used repression to weaken their opponents. Irish party bosses were famous for the ingenuity with which they systematically weakened labor and socialist parties. Machine-controlled bureaucrats and judges denied parade and meeting permits. The party's plug-uglies armed with brass knuckles waded into peaceful assemblies. Opposition leaders were frequently arrested on trumped-up charges. For insurgent Jews and Italians, the Irish machines specialized in rigorous enforcement of Sunday closing laws and in punitive denial of business permits.

Entrenched machines, in contrast, managed electoral demand in different ways. With little competitive electoral challenge, these machines turned a deaf ear to the pleas of newcomers for help with

naturalization, registration, and voting. For example, what accounts for Tammany Hall's about-face in its treatment of immigrants between the 1860s and the early 1900s? The massive party-sponsored naturalization of the Irish and the Germans gave way to a not-so-benign electoral neglect of later-arriving Jews and Italians. Tammany's Yankee party chieftains in the 1860s had as much revulsion toward the Irish as Irish bosses after the turn of the century would have against the Southern and Eastern Europeans. The difference is that Tammany needed the immigrant vote in the 1860s and 1870s to fend off both a strong state Republican party and rival local Democratic organizations such as Irving Hall and the County Democracy. Having finally banished its opponents, except for an occasional reform mayor, the Tammany Hall of Charles Francis Murphy in 1910 no longer needed the new immigrant vote. Chicago's Irish Democratic party bosses Roger Sullivan and George Brennan worked far harder than their Tammany counterparts in the teens and twenties to naturalize and register the city's Poles, Czechs, Jews, and Italians. They had to, for Republican boss and mayor "Big Bill" Thompson was successfully mobilizing and wooing the same new ethnic voters.

The voter management strategy of the entrenched Irish machines—to mobilize the old but not the new immigrants—contributed to their short-term longevity. The machine's limited stock of patronage jobs and services would suffice to reward a smaller electorate of old but not new immigrants. This electoral strategy, however, had long-term costs. One of the chief reasons that the established Irish machines fell was that enterprising opposition leaders finally succeeded in mobilizing the new ethnics. For example, the Irish machines of New York and Jersey City fell in the 1930s and 1940s as reform leaders such as Fiorello La Guardia actively worked to naturalize, register, and win the votes of Italians, Jews, and Poles. In the 1980s, the Chicago machine staggered when finally challenged by the black community.

Electoral management is only half the story of the Irish machine's longevity. Machines also had to manage resources. The rainbow theory addresses the distributional strategies of the machines: how the Irish got police and fire jobs, the Jews teaching jobs, and the Italians lowly places in sanitation. Yet machines con-

centrated as much on *creating* resources as distributing them. Far too little attention has been given to what I would term a "supply-side" theory of the machine. What were the primary means machines used to enlarge the supply of tangible benefits, particularly new patronage jobs? What were the attendant political benefits *and* risks of different ways of enlarging the pie?

This study offers the beginnings of a "supply-side" theory of the machine. I consider such resource-enhancement strategies as tax increases, increases in public debt, annexation and incorporation, reliance on private sector patronage, and alliances with county, state, and federal bosses to capture additional public sector patronage. But each expansionary strategy had risks as well as benefits. For example, tax increases prompted middle-class tax revolts. Annexation enlarged the city's boundaries without increasing the tax rate. Yet annexation also enlarged the big-city electorate by including the outward-migrating and antimachine middle class.

Rainbow's End also presents a more complicated picture of the Irish machine's distributional decisions than that offered by conventional theory. The rainbow theorists posit an electorally "rational" distributional process: Machines allocate jobs and services to ethnic groups in proportion to their anticipated vote for the organization's candidates. This study argues that machine allocational decisions were more retrospective than prospective. Machines overrewarded previously incorporated groups and underrewarded newly incorporated groups. The Irish machine's supply of patronage jobs, for example, dramatically increased during the Progressive era. Remembering the old immigrants' antimachine insurgency in the 1870s and 1880s, the Celtic bosses gave the bulk of the new public sector jobs to the Irish rather than to Jews or Italians.

Rainbow theorists miss another dimension of the machine's allocational processes. The Irish machines developed elaborate ethnically differentiated benefit systems. The machine's core resources of power and patronage were reserved for the Irish, with minor shares given to the most serious challengers among the new ethnics, for example, Jews rather than Italians. Irish bosses preferred to give newcomers less valuable resources: services such as business licenses, symbolic recognition such as nomination to minor

offices or machine observance of ethnic holidays such as Columbus Day, and labor and social welfare legislation.

Rainbow theorists also posit that machines trafficked primarily if not exclusively in divisible benefits rather than collective benefits. Divisible benefits such as patronage jobs could be rewarded or withheld from individuals in exchange for support for the machine. Collective benefits like Social Security checks, however, were distributed to program rather than political eligibles. Machines supposedly opposed collective benefits because they reduced the machine's monopoly over jobs and services for the working class. Machines could not control the allocation of collective benefits as readily as they could for divisible benefits.

This study, however, argues that machines actually supported collective benefit programs, ranging from the labor legislation of the Progressive era to the social welfare legislation of the New Deal and Great Society eras. The Irish machines lobbied for collective benefits in order to pay off junior ethnic coalitional partners at minimal cost to continued Irish control over the machine's divisible benefits of power and patronage. The machine's collective benefit strategy worked with Jews and Italians during the Progressive and New Deal eras and with blacks during the Great Society era.

The allocation of less valuable benefits to later ethnic groups represented a short-term machine distributional strategy. What happened when the new ethnics finally mobilized? In the long run, successful machines had to be more accommodating of the new ethnics' political demands. For working-class voters, demanding a great share of patronage jobs and welfare services, successful machines had to fashion a favorable exchange ratio between claimants and resources. Machines were in trouble when the ratio broke down because of rising numbers of voters or declining numbers of patronage jobs. Many of the established Irish machines fell precisely because they were unable to increase their resources as the big-city electorate grew.

The Depression and New Deal represented a watershed for big-city Irish machines. The machines' limited political incorporation of Southern and Eastern Europeans finally failed. Democratic presidential candidates Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt brought

Jews, Italians, and Poles into the voting booth in record numbers. In cities such as New York and Chicago, the number of voters *doubled* between 1928 and 1936. What would happen if these new ethnic voters turned on the aging machines? Because of the Depression, the Irish machines found their resource base depleted at precisely the time they needed additional resources in order to court the new ethnics. The frenetic machine pursuit of federal patronage, particularly the WPA, can be understood as a strategy to increase the supply of machine benefits for the new voters.

To secure middle-class votes, however, machines had to devise a much different menu of policies. Middle-class voters were homeowners, sensitive to tax increases and less desirous of patronage jobs and welfare services. Middle-class voters demanded low taxes and homeowner services such as garbage collection and street repair. The longevity of the Irish machines of Chicago, Albany, and Pittsburgh well into the post–World War II era is attributable to their ability to shift from working-class to middle-class policies for white ethnics while piggybacking welfare-state programs for blacks and Hispanics.

This new theory of the machine's longevity in terms of an equilibrium between claimants and resources, particularly for working-class ethnic groups, is also a theory of the machine's demise. Middle-class reformers rarely destroyed machines. As Tammany sachem George Washington Plunkitt once observed, reformers were "shortlived morning glories."[18] Tammany Hall, for example, easily survived the reform administrations of Seth Low and John Purroy Mitchel. Machines were in trouble both when reformers increased the number of political participants by mobilizing the newer ethnic arrivals *and* when the machines lacked the resources to outbid them. Machines were in serious trouble when reformers rewarded as well as mobilized the newcomers. In New York City, Fiorello La Guardia permanently weakened Tammany Hall between 1933 and 1945 by mobilizing the city's Jews and Italians *and* by rewarding them. La Guardia tightened the city's civil service system in order to recruit Jews and Italians at the expense of the Irish while dramatically increasing the size of the city's human services bureaucracies. A new cohort of ethnic working-class voters had been politically indoctrinated and rewarded by Tammany's

opponents. The Wigwam (as Tammany was called) would never be the same.

This study is particularly critical of one leading theory of the machine's demise. Rexford Tugwell in *The Brains Trust* and Edwin O'Connor in his magnificent *The Last Hurrah,* a barely fictionalized account of Boston's James Michael Curley, argue that New Deal social welfare programs destroyed the machines by breaking the organization's monopoly over the jobs and services distributed to urban working-class voters. With the advent of Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and unemployment compensation, urban voters no longer had to go to the machines for help.[19]

In some ways the New Deal did weaken local machines. FDR's mobilization of the urban ethnic vote destroyed or permanently weakened the established Republican machines in cities such as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. The New Deal electoral coalition also turned on the entrenched Irish Democratic machines in cities such as New York and Jersey City. With many of the big-city machines reduced to rubble, New Deal labor legislation and social programs appeared to make it harder to build a *new* generation of machines. The Wagner Act, for example, strengthened labor as a political actor—in local as well as in national politics. In cities like Detroit with a strong reform rather than machine tradition, unions stepped into the political vacuum created by weak parties. The United Auto Workers' Committee on Political Education performed such party functions as getting out the vote. Union collective bargaining agreements took the place of the machine's patronage and welfare services. With unions performing traditional party functions, machines were harder to rebuild in the post–New Deal era. New Deal social programs, particularly Social Security, reduced the machine's control over the stream of government benefits going to voters and thus enabled some voters to be more politically independent.[20]

Yet for machines that survived the twin shoals of the New Deal electoral coalition and the Depression, the social programs of the New Deal and the Great Society represented potent tools for machine strengthening. In the postwar era, a third set of migrants came to northern cities. Poor blacks and Hispanics demanded the machine's traditional menu of patronage jobs and welfare services.

Yet machines could no longer supply these working-class benefits. Eroding tax bases and civil service reform cut deeply into the supply of patronage. Newly prosperous white middle-class voters demanded low taxes. Machines catered to the newer migrants with welfare-state programs, particularly public housing and AFDC, at minimal cost to the city treasury and to white taxpayers. Machine control of the black and Hispanic vote, however, now depended on a steady stream of social program benefits. With cutbacks in federal and state social programs in the Reagan era, this flow of benefits to the minority community was interrupted. The black revolt in the 1980s against the last of the machines was in large part fueled by welfare-state retrenchment. Social program retrenchment, not growth, has destabilized the few remaining big-city machines.

Overview of the Study

This interpretation of the machine's performance and beneficiaries is based on a comparative study of machine dynamics in eight once heavily Irish-American cities—New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Jersey City, and Albany—from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-1980s. As Table 1 shows, in 1870 these cities were among the eleven most heavily Irish of the twenty-five cities with more than 50,000 population. They ranged from Boston, with nearly one-quarter of its population born in Ireland, to Chicago, with almost one-eighth of its residents from the Emerald Isle. Of the ten most heavily Irish cities, only New Haven and Providence have been excluded from this study because of the paucity of data about their formative political histories. The existing studies of New Haven and Providence politics, however, suggest a replication of the patterns of machine and ethnic politics uncovered in the eight cities studied.[21]

This study is not based solely on a case study of a single machine. Nor is it based on case studies of only those cities where mature machines developed. Instead, I compare two sets of big cities with large Irish-American populations: those where Irish-controlled machines emerged and those cities where no strong citywide machine appeared or where a machine not controlled by